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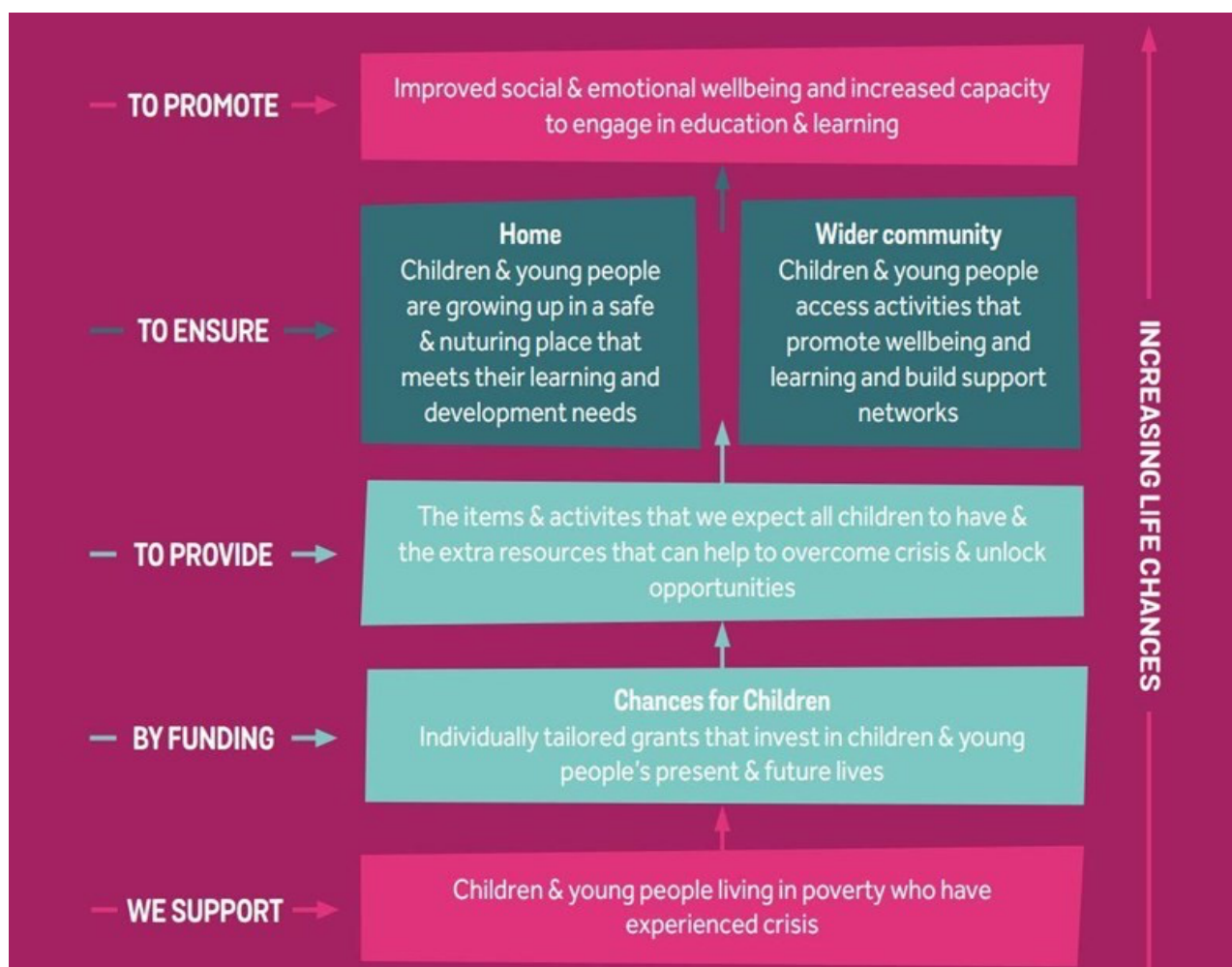
Boarding Chances for Children

2021 - 2022

BOARDING CHANCES FOR CHILDREN

Frank Buttle began work in 1937 to achieve his vision of creating a fund that would lift children out of a life of poverty. His dream was the precursor to the work still done today by Buttle UK, through our Chances for Children and Support for Boarding grants. The latter are awarded where families are experiencing ongoing crises which impede children's social and emotional wellbeing, and their capacity to engage in education. Parents and carers are sometimes unable to adequately care for their children due to the severity of the crisis in the home, which can leave their child at risk of going into care. Funding for a place at a boarding school allows the child to recover from trauma and access the education and activities needed that can help them to thrive. It also offers the family respite to cope with the issues they are experiencing, many of which can have an enduring impact. The school place can also contribute to families ultimately staying together, even through very difficult circumstances.

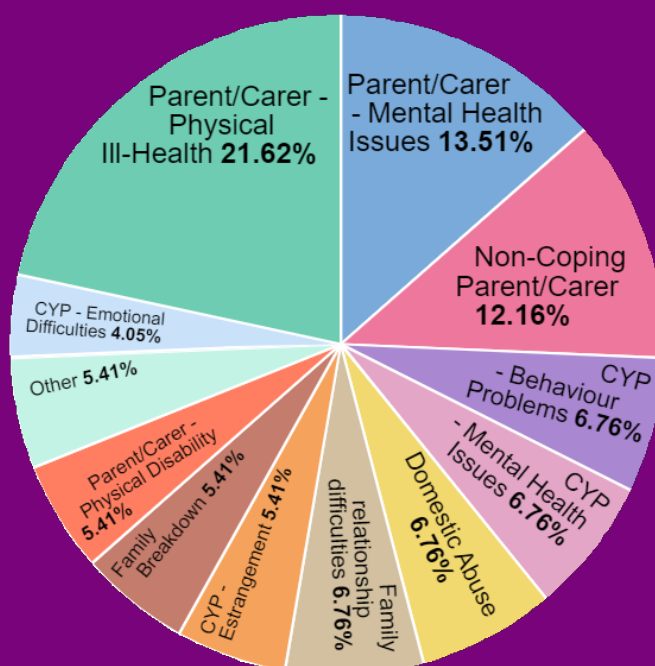
In 2021-22 financial year, Buttle UK granted **£874,971** towards boarding school fees, funding **102** children. This funding is matched by independent boarding schools via bursary funds or state boarding schools through their foundations, and we'd like to thank the schools for their support and funding. This report looks at the cohort who have finished their secondary or further education this year, and those that we are proud to be continuing to support this year too. We have gathered perspectives directly from young students, as well as those of their parents and carers, which help us to understand how their experiences meet the outcomes we aim for in our 'Theory of Change'.



2021-22 FINISHING COHORT

We report on academic attainment and changes to overall wellbeing from information provided by families completing a finishers survey. This year, we had responses for 31 of the 36 finishers, representing 86% of the cohort. The length of time that these young people have received a boarding grant ranges between 2 to 7 years. The 2021-22 cohort have their own unique and diverse circumstances, but many have shared experiences which are captured by our award reasons. The top ten are available below. This cohort reported high levels of parent/carer illness and/or disability, likely contributing to the high numbers of parents and carers being described as non-coping. Experiencing life changing illness or having a child with long-term health issues or disability, is hugely difficult. These circumstances cause, or are compounded by, financial hardship due to reduced earning power.

Poor mental health across the family was cited as a critical factor in this cohort, reported for 13.5% of parents/carers and 6.8% of children. The award reasons suggest that many children and young people were suffering with emotional difficulties and poor behaviour, most likely at least in part due to the stressful living circumstances. Boarding schools can offer the stability, safety and holistic support that children need to thrive. This is important for families too, so they have the space needed to recover, which is particularly significant given the prevalence of family breakdown and estrangement. Bereavement was also a factor in some households. Boarding schools offer the capacity of trained professional support, as well as the benefit of peer relationships and friendships.



GCSE Subject	Average grade	GCSE Subject	Average grade
Maths	6.3	Design Technology	7.3
English Language	6.4	Art	5.6
English Literature	6.2	Music	6.3
Biology	7.6	Drama	7.3
Chemistry	7.4	Textiles	7
Physics	7.1	Physical Education	6.6
Double Science	5.7	Spanish	6.2
History	6.3	German	7
Geography	7.3	French	8
Religious Studies	7.2	Latin	7
Psychology	6	Business Studies	5.3

ACADEMIC RESULTS

Buttle UK's Theory of Change illustrates how the aim of all our grant giving is to contribute to the improvement of young people's social and emotional wellbeing and their capacity to engage in education. For boarders, we measure both through using a strengths and difficulties questionnaire (see next section). With boarding fees grants, we also have an opportunity to reflect on the difference to attainment that our grants can make. This year, the 19 for whom we have results have achieved fantastically well in their GCSEs:

- They took on average 9 GCSEs, above the national average of just shy of 8 GCSEs.
- 97% of the GCSEs taken resulted in a score of 4 or above, above the national average of 73%.
- 78% of this cohort achieved a result of 5 in both Maths and English, above the national average of 50%.

National reporting on the GCSE results for Summer 2022 shows that, sadly, the KS4 disadvantage gap has widened to its greatest level since 2011. The results achieved by this cohort, given their experiences, demonstrates the compelling power of a boarding grant in overcoming attainment disadvantage. Similarly, the 12 A-Level students for whom we have results have also achieved excellent results:

- This cohort achieved an 89% pass rate, above the national average of 82%.
- The average number of A-Levels taken was 2.9, above the national average of 2.6.
- These students undertook an incredibly broad array of qualifications, including not just A-Levels but additional BTECs and for one, the International Baccalaureate.
- One young person joined 8,570 nationally to achieve A* grades for all three A-Levels taken.

Qualitative feedback indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic is continuing to have an impact on our boarding grantees. Education settings experienced extreme challenges during school closures, a factor which was keenly felt by boarding schools. Many parents, and some young people themselves, reported that they felt they might have done even better than they did, had they had more stability in their education during the pandemic.

What next for this cohort?

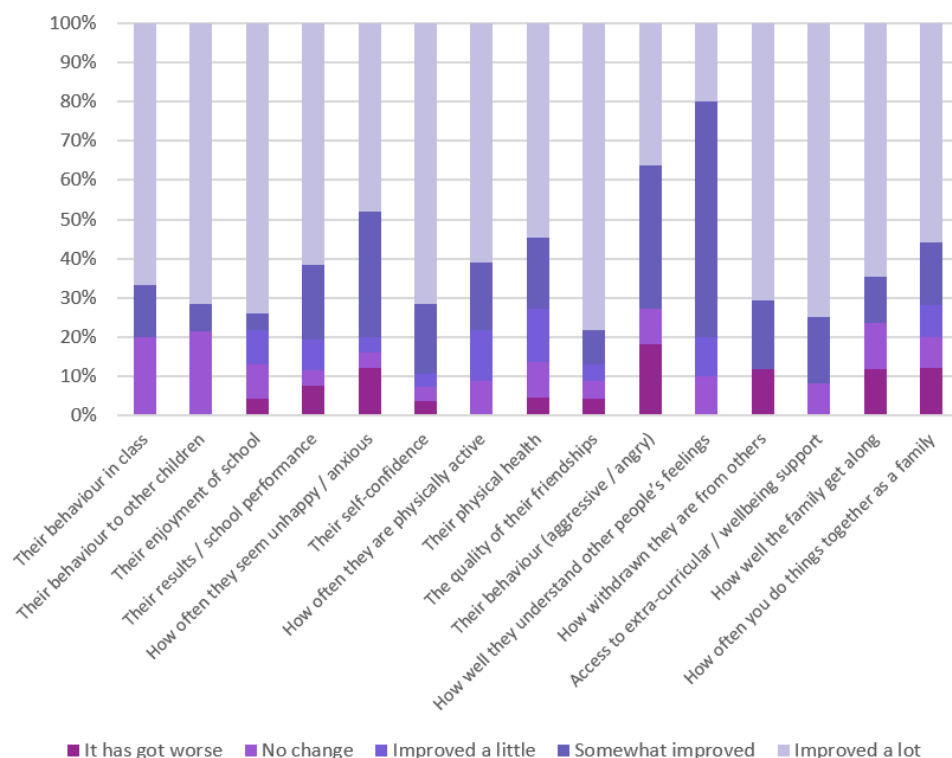
Of the 19 GCSE students, 18 are continuing onto A-levels, with one seeking an apprenticeship.

Many are staying on at their school to complete their A-levels, with Buttle UK funding one of these places due to ongoing need.

Of the 12 we supported through to A-Levels (because of extenuating circumstances), 11 are off to university...and one is becoming a professional cricketer!

The subjects they are going to study include Law, Psychology, Forensic Chemistry, Geography, Accountancy and Biomedical Sciences, all across the country.

WIDER IMPACTS FOR FINISHERS

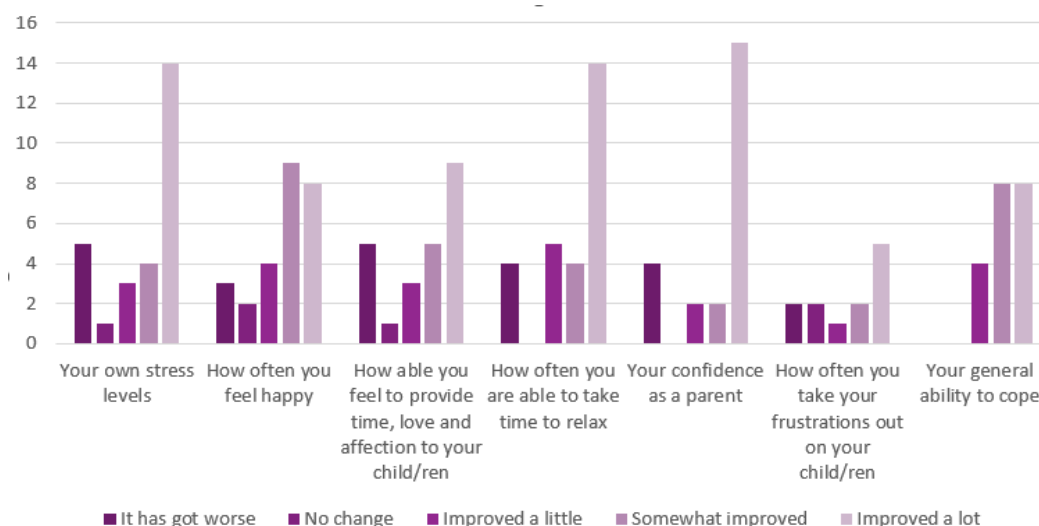


Parents and carers reported on a range of areas in their final survey, relating to the wider improvements they saw in the young people who formed the 2021-22 finishing cohort.

Caregivers consistently rated the highest improvements in their child's behaviour in class (80% overall improvement) and towards their peers (78%), the quality of their friendships (87%), and access to extra-curricular and wellbeing support (92%). This reflects the high-quality provision on offer at boarding schools, as well as the opportunity to make and sustain long-term friendships.

However, there were some parents and carers who reported areas where improvements were weaker, or even saw a decline. Some caregivers reported that behaviour had got worse (18%), as well as a decline in family relationships (12%) and family activities (12%). There are wider factors to consider, such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this data can contribute to our understanding of how boarding grants do not always change a child and family's wellbeing positively. Where this is the case, we can try and identify factors to support future grant awards. Overall, however, the trend was in significant net improvements across all factors.

The priority for our Boarding Chances for Children grants will always be to achieve improved outcomes for the children we support. Nonetheless, we are keen to understand how the family home benefits from a child's attendance at boarding school, particularly given the high level of need within households and, as demonstrated in the award reasons for this cohort, exceptional strain on parents and carers. The graph below summarises caregivers' self-rated improvements for a number of statements. It is clear that improvements are not as strongly positive as for grantees. Nonetheless, parents/carers particularly report improvements to their stress levels, their confidence, time to relax and their own happiness. Stress levels and the ability to provide love and time to their children saw a mix of responses, though a net improvement overall.



LEAVING COHORT: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

When asked to put into their own words what attending boarding school has meant for them, we received heartening, honest perspectives from the school leavers. They demonstrate very articulately the broad benefits and experiences of attending a boardingschool through a Buttle UK grant. These perspectives inform, and widen, our understanding of exactly what grants can mean to individuals. While there are shared experiences, so too are there unique and interesting perspectives too. We are delighted to share these exactly as they were shared with us.

“Boarding gave me the opportunity to be onsite where I had access to all of the sports facilities without having to bring in various sporting equipment each day. As an athlete, having meals provided for me was another bonus. It allowed me to connect and make friends with so many more people than I would have done if I wasn't a boarder; activities at the weekend was great fun. On the whole, boarding enhanced my experience of 6th form and gave me opportunities to be involved with projects and voluntary role to not only enhance my experience, but to allow me to create benefits for others through the school projects.

“I've learnt a lot of things at (School) and I've experienced both the good and the bad. I hope that in future years charities have more of a relationship with those they offer support to and that a solid rapport is built to maintain happiness at school. Nevertheless, I have met some people who I will be in contact with for life and who made my experience manageable.

“My time in (School) has been fantastic. I have enjoyed the variety of activities such as Thorpe Park, water parks and bonding with the other students. The teachers have also made my time amazing as I have grown bonds with adults which has taught me that friendships can be made with anyone...being in school makes me happy due to the amount of people there is to talk to and hang out with. Overall my experience in (School) has been phenomenal.

“Looking back on what I have achieved such as my confidence with my classwork and public speaking, the friendships I have made; whilst being at school has made me even more grateful for the support you have given me. Whilst being at (School) I have had amazing opportunities such as DofE, travelling abroad, being a prefect, education school trips, first aid training, school council, choir, my GCSEs and A-Levels which I have loved every second. In addition, school has been a place where I always felt safe and when things weren't so great at home it was a stress-free environment to be in where I always had someone I trust to talk to whether it was my friends or teachers. Being in boarding helped me to focus on school and build better relationships with people, including my family.

“I have really enjoyed my time there, being away from home allowed me time to forget my experience and calmed me down a lot. I was very angry and did say hurtful things to everyone around me.

“My time at school has been very exhilarating with a lot of highs and lows. Being able to experience boarding school has been such an amazing opportunity in my life, as it has allowed for me to make many friends and also to have the chance to receive amazing teaching with my peers. Being at school has made me more confident, as it has pushed me beyond my limits not just in the classroom, but also outside of it and made me a more adventurous and curious person. Without this opportunity, I wouldn't be where I am today.

“School has been a whirlwind. It was less the place and more the people, so as the years have progressed people have changed. I've had times of fun, but also sadness, angry and loneliness. School has been both a haven and a prison of sorts. It's become a yin and yang situation. I thought I had fallen into its rhythm, especially during exams, so it was disappointing to me when I didn't get a 9 in any subject let alone maths or physical education. I am excited to return to school as the people who made me feel discomfort have left, and so I am excited to continue learning in a place that is both familiar & safe to me.

What is the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire?

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is an internationally recognised tool for measuring the overall mental health and wellbeing of children aged 2-17. It is particularly powerful for understanding the impact of our Boarding Chances for Children programme due to the longitudinal approach we can take. We have therefore begun to consistently use the SDQ with young people in our annual renewal and, more recently, baseline surveys.

The scores are aggregated from a questionnaire consisting of 25 psychometric questions, and the results can be compared nationally to all UK children aged 4-17. The scores are a measure of **total difficulties** the child is experiencing, taken from questions around emotions, conduct, peer relationships and hyperactivity. There is also a prosocial score. This measures a child's resources, rather than difficulties, in social situations related to wellbeing.

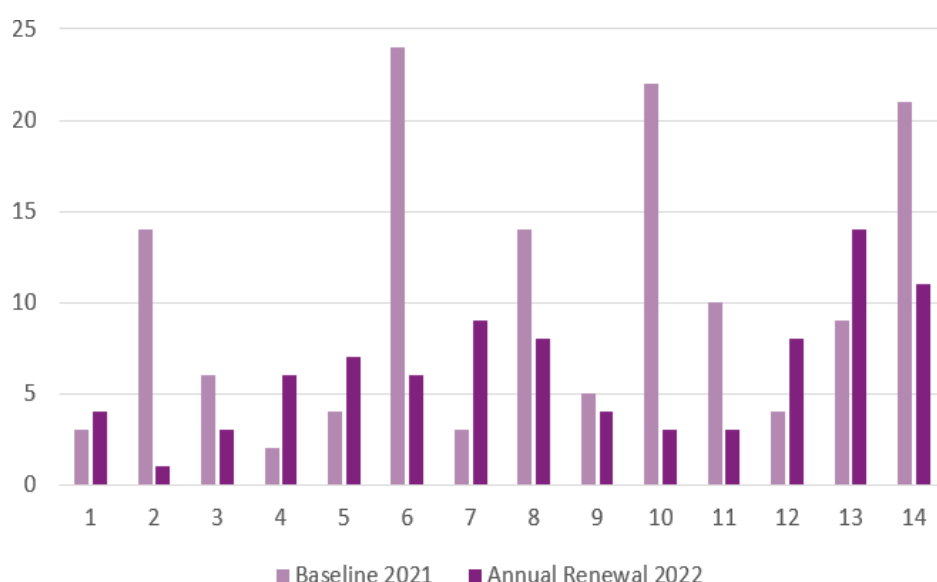
Total difficulties	Bandings/ brackets	UK wide comparison
0-13	<i>Close to average</i>	80%
14-16	<i>Slightly raised</i>	10%
17-19	<i>High</i>	5%
20-40	<i>Very high</i>	5%

SDQ: THE CURRENT COHORT

This year, we have comparable data for the 2021 new starters cohort at baseline and their subsequent scores in the annual renewal form completed in Summer 2022. We are also able to represent entire cohorts by their scores and collective averages, allowing us a deeper insight into what we learn from award reasons. Our analysis suggests:

- The average total difficulty score for the fifty-six young people in the 2022-23 continuing cohort was 11. This is at the upper end of the national average. 27% of this cohort reported high or very high total difficulties.
- The incoming cohort of seven new starters in 2022 had an average total difficulty score of 8. This is slightly less than the baseline of the sixteen new starters in the 2021 cohort, who averaged 9.
- The average prosocial score for the 2022-23 continuing cohort and new starters was 7 and 9 respectively. The former is within the 'slightly lower' bracket against the national average, suggesting that our continuing cohort lack the mental resources needed to thrive socially.

This year is the first time we have used SDQ scores over time, to help understand the difference that the grant might be making to the mental wellbeing of children for whom we have data. We have fourteen young people for whom we have the baseline data and renewal survey data. The comparisons for each of these students is shown in the graph below. **On average, this cohort's total difficulties score decreased by 4 points in one year.** Eight saw decreases of between 2-19 points, with an average decrease of 10 points. These decreases represent a hugely important insight into the impacts of even one year of attending boarding school, which are backed up in the accompanying qualitative comments.



Interestingly, six young people saw an increase of between 1-6 points, averaging a 4 point increase. Care-givers attribute these to complex factors such as issues at home, homesickness and emotional development. This demonstrates the complexities involved with drawing conclusions on whole cohorts. We will continue to monitor these results year-on-year and use them to help assess the impact of internal and external factors on those we support with boarding grants.

CURRENT COHORT: 2022-23

We are delighted to be supporting 74 pupils in the 2022-23 academic year, of which 14 are through our partnership with Royal National Children's Springboard Foundation (RNCSF). Our year-on-year numbers have fallen slightly once again due to a very high number of leavers in this school year. Those leaving this year were from an earlier version of our boarding programme when we only contributed small amounts, e.g. £1,500, towards fees. Small contributions from us meant we supported more pupils but put more pressure on families to part contribute. In 2018 we moved to a 50/50 split with schools which meant we contributed more funding per place, alongside schools. This ultimately means supporting fewer pupils than we used to. Increasing school fees and our commitment to upholding strict thresholds regarding the cases we support are also contributing factors to reduced numbers. We welcomed seven new starters in September 2022, with another due to start in January 2023. Efforts are ongoing

through our partnership with RNCSF, local authorities and outreach within our Chances for Children Programme to identify new cases in the future from families who would not have considered boarding as an option.

Our 2022-23 cohort have been in education throughout the pandemic, some in their current boarding schools and some in the schools they attended before. The impact of the pandemic on education were universal, with pupils nationwide undertaking distance learning or facing a reduced offer in school. Arguably, the young people supported by Buttle UK were disadvantaged more than their peers due to the very crises at home that entitled them to a grant in the first place. Therefore, we are continuing to monitor the impact of the pandemic in the feedback and reports from parents and carers. As ever, we continue to annually collect rolling feedback from families related to many aspects of their child's place in boarding school and the impact it has both home and away.

CURRENT COHORT: LIFE AS A BOARDER

This year, for the first time, we trialled a survey designed especially for younger people. While we send surveys at multiple points to parents/carers, we have not as yet designed one specifically for young people. This marks a development from our work in 2021 and 2020, when we conducted interviews with a sample of young people for the first time. These offered fantastic insights into many facets of the boarding experience. However, participation was limited to those that had the time and confidence to participate online. We reflected on whether undertaking a third set of interviews (with a repeating cohort) would offer different perspectives. We also considered how to increase inclusivity and offer different ways to encourage young people with different strengths to get involved. Therefore, this year, we invited all current boarders to complete a survey. We asked them:



- To rate a series of simple statements about their wellbeing, their friendships and their learning using a simplified Likert scale.
- To summarise their favourite things about boarding and anything they do not like about it
- To reflect on how they thought their life might be different if they had not attended boarding school.
- The impact of going to boarding school on their wellbeing.

We received responses from 28 number of pupils following a ten-day invitation period. This represents 47% of the current cohort (funded directly through Buttle UK), with representation from Years 7-13.

PERSPECTIVES ON BOARDING SCHOOL

This first section is related to the ratings we asked our survey respondents to make about a series of statements, as well as an opportunity to express in writing their feelings on specific aspects of boarding school.

Buttle UK is pleased to report that 86% of our survey respondents felt happy or very happy with their school overall. This is hugely positive, given the challenging circumstances that cause these young people to attend boarding school and the very different experience that attending a boarding school presents. Indeed, only 36% of the young people felt this way about attending before they started, with 46% feeling neutral and for 18% unhappy.

Positive, supportive relationships were often reported as a factor in their enjoyment; 93% of respondents felt happy or very happy with their friendships at school, while 82% felt the same way about the supportive adults such as teachers and house parents. Those who reported being unhappy with these aspects described the tension of being 'stuck' with teachers/adults who they did not like. Alternatively, some felt sadness because they felt the loss of favourite teachers all the more.

I enjoy the encouragement and support that I receive from the teaching staff and my house parents.

I love being with my friends and socializing a lot and all the time, I like the way that if you ever need to talk to someone, there are usually people.

You get to meet lots of different people and make friendships you may not have had the chance to do otherwise. It is easier with homework because if you don't understand, your house mistress does and you can ask them and your house mistress might know more than your parent.

[I don't like] when teachers leave the school.

A major theme of the surveys related to the fantastic wider benefits that boarding schools can offer. Over three quarters of the survey respondents felt positive about the wider opportunities they were afforded, which they commented on extensively in their written answers.

Many also referenced the benefits of having space and quiet to work in.

It was clear that a sense of routine and structure was something many relied on. More rarely, respondents elaborated on the specific difficulties that they felt they were avoiding by living away from home. This level of introspection was more often shared by older students.

My favourite thing is that I get to do so many different extra-curricular activities. Most day schools don't offer as many activities, but at my school we can do canoeing, horse riding, army cadets, cooking & loads of cool stuff.

When I'm at school I work better and get more work done than I would at home

I like the freedom that the school gives you, even though your day is structured, you get a lot of freedom in what you do in your free time, you also get to pick your after school activities.

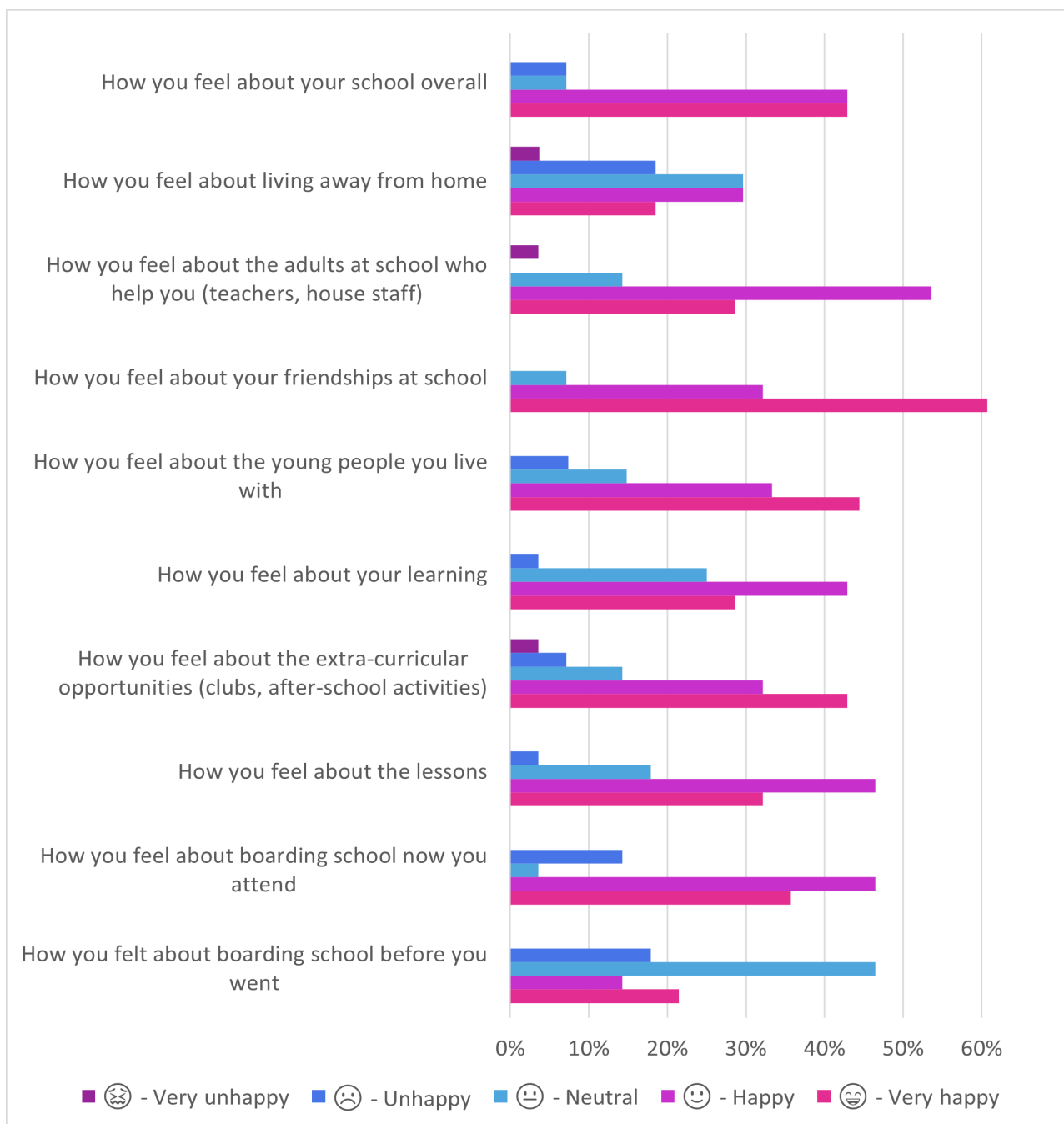
I don't have to worry about meals because I know I will always be able to eat nutritious meals and snacks here! I don't have to worry about my mum being stressed about looking after me so she can look after my little brother.

For some of our students, boarding school is needed to offer respite from family illness and disability. While some acknowledge a sense of relief in being away from those difficult circumstances, there was always a pervasive theme of homesickness and sadness at being separated from family. This was reflected in their ratings too; 48% were happy or very happy to be away from home, while 30% felt neutral and 22% felt unhappy. This question split the respondents. Those that felt neutral often shared a written response which demonstrated that their homesickness was counterbalanced by the wider fun, safety and comfort of being at school though never entirely dissipated.

I do miss home, my brother included, but overall I like being here.

Sometimes I just crave to go home. It can be a bit scary sometimes being in a big school, not able to go home.

[I dislike] not having somebody like family close in case anything happens. Or when you are feeling unwell they are really strict about getting you back into school as soon as possible, which is understandable but annoying.



Much of what has been said here is hugely positive, as are the survey responses overall. While we are delighted that our grantees feel this way, the feelings of those that are unhappy are just as valid, such as the 14% who reported that they were unhappy at boarding school. We analysed the written responses of those that rated their feelings as unhappy or very unhappy in any area. In summary, the common themes they expressed were related to strict rules, particularly with regard to access to phones and a dislike of the rigid routines regarding lessons and activities.

While each individual boarding school we work alongside is unique, we can use this feedback to ensure new grantees are giving a broad picture of what they might expect at boarding school.

All the rules and that we don't get our phones.

I miss being away from home especially at the weekends as the weekends are sometimes boring as we tend to repeat a lot of the activities!

I don't like all of the restrictions I have when I am in house, and I would like the day to be a bit shorter

Interestingly, aside from the ratings section of the survey, our respondents rarely referred to their lessons. Perhaps this reflects what boarding school means to them, namely the much wider social and cultural experience. The ratings indicated that 79% of young people felt happy or very happy about their lessons, with only one respondent indicating that they were unhappy. Positively, three-quarters also felt happy or very happy with their learning, while none reported feeling unhappy.

PERSPECTIVES ON WELLBEING

Naturally, it's difficult to capture how the lives of our grantees might have been without help to attend boarding school. However, they offered many thoughtful responses which shone a light on what their placement really means to them.

I don't want to think how my life would be if I hadn't attended boarding school because it would be probably awful and I'm so grateful to be here

I don't have arguments with Mum and she doesn't have to moan at me for not doing things. When I go home at weekends we only do fun stuff so I definitely think it's made our relationship better.

I think boarding school is a lot safer than going to a day school because you don't get into fights with other people from different schools and it's like a community where everyone looks out for each other.

It would have been a waste because of my home environment which is not suitable for learning.

I think I wouldn't have the friends I have today and I would've gone to a very bad [state] school

I would be bored and very disruptive in classes...I don't think I would be able to concentrate at home and I don't think I could do my GCSES.

I feel like my life may not have been as straightforward and I may have strayed away from education to do more counterproductive things

Positive themes of friendship and learning were present throughout their written responses. The young people showed high levels of introspection across the

survey, but particularly in reflecting on the potential disruption to their education and achievements that remaining at home may have had.

In this survey, we asked our young respondents to share simple insights into how their wellbeing has changed as a result of their time at boarding school. Most responses are positive and reflect many of the important aspects our respondents shared across the survey. Those that are negative offer us opportunities to feed back to schools and reflect on what we can share with new grantees in the future.

I'm happy. I think it makes it easier for my mum, she's not well.

Both [good and bad], because it has really matured me, but then again, I don't like being away from home for so long...as I don't get the time at home that I think I need.

It has made me much more confident

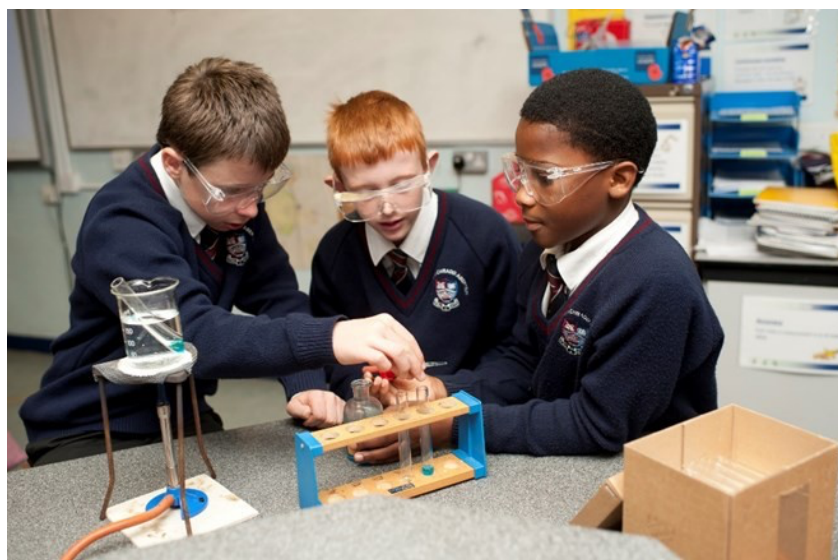
Sometimes I am more sad because I am homesick. I am happier being with my friends in the house. We look out for each other.

I like life more at school, I like being around people

I am happier, I can keep friends and have no interruptions

It has its ups and downs but overall it has had a really good effect on my mental wellbeing!

We are grateful to the respondents for their mature insights and for sharing their honest perspectives.



CLOSING REMARKS

We are proud to have completed another year of support through boarding for young people facing serious disadvantage. The opportunity that a Support for Boarding Grant gives is clear across the myriad data and feedback we have collected from our grantees, and from their parents and carers. We wish to extend our thanks to all who have contributed by completing surveys and getting in touch; we could not examine and improve our impact without your input.

Times are challenging. While we are pleased to see the impacts of COVID-19 diminishing in the feedback we received this year, fears and concerns around the cost-of-living crisis are becoming apparent in some of the written responses. We feel optimistic that our grantees will be somewhat shielded from this crisis by the outstanding provision afforded by boarding schools, particularly mental health support and wider extra-curricular opportunities. Nonetheless, across all of our grant making at Buttle UK, we are taking steps to listen and respond as new challenges present themselves.

We are always looking for different ways to involve our grantees to help improve our impact. Our boarding grantees offer particularly valuable perspectives, as they receive a grant over time. We already invite our boarding grantees to take part in activities such as interviews and, for the first time this year, a survey. We are now looking to explore how we can speak to and engage our alumni, in order to better understand the long-term impact of our grant-making. We want to explore how attending a boarding school with a grant has changed their life outcomes, particularly their wellbeing and academic future.

Finally, we are also happy to report that Buttle UK has recently recruited a Co-Production and Youth Engagement Manager. This role will be developing exciting new opportunities for authentic involvement from our grantees that informs decision-making and best practice across all of our work. When asked if they would be interested in being a part of a Youth Panel (or equivalent activities), 80% of boarding survey respondents indicated that they would! This offers a really meaningful chance for our current boarders to work with Buttle UK to ensure we continue to strive for the best possible outcomes.



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